

REMARKS

This Response to Office Action is submitted in reply to the Office Action dated December 16, 2005. Claims 1, 17, 24, 34 and 35 have been amended for clarification. New claims 36 to 39 have been added. No new matter has been added by these amendments or new claims. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

A petition for a three month extension of time to respond to the Office Action and a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) are submitted herewith.

Please charge deposit account number 02-1818 for any fee due in connection with the filing of this Response and Supplemental IDS.

The Office Action objected Claim 17 under 37 CFR 1.75(c) for being of improper dependent form by failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. Applicants have amended Claim 17 to depend from Claim 16, as originally intended. Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 17 is in proper dependent form and request withdrawal of this objection.

Claims 1 and 4 to 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Telnaes (U.S. Patent No. 4,448,419). Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

Amended independent Claim 1 is generally directed to a method for facilitating a play of a slot game. The method includes, amongst other elements, (a) presenting, in the play of the slot game, a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel segments, (b) presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and (c) deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol. The method repeats steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

On page 3, the Office Action stated that:

[in] Telnaes' gaming machine the system allows for virtual reel stops that are activated and deactivated based on the random number readout (see col. 4: ln 41- col. 5, ln 4). This enables several virtual positions to be activated and deactivated resulting and affecting the physical symbol read out and the stopping positions of the physical reels.

Telnaes' also allows for repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments associated with the discontinued symbols, until a predetermined number of active reel segments have been deactivated (ie: the system will continue to rotate through the mechanical reels until they are brought to a stop (deactivated) in the display grid)(see col. 4, ln 19-40).

Contrary to the Office Action, and unlike amended independent Claim 1, Telnaes does not anticipate a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that includes, amongst other elements, (b) presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, (c) deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, and (d) repeating steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated. Telnaes discloses control circuitry that randomly determines a reel stop position for each reel. The control circuitry stops each reel at the determined position for each play of the game based on random number. In Telnaes, after each reel is stopped, payout logic determines and indicates a payout based on the positions of the stopped reels. Thus, in one play of the Telnaes game, Telnaes discloses rotating the reels, stopping the reels at the randomly determined position and determining and indicating a payout based on the positions of the stopped reels. The Telnaes game does not anticipate repeating steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated, as in amended independent Claim 1.

Moreover, unlike amended independent Claim 1, the reels of Telnaes are not associated with a discontinue symbol. Control circuitry stops the Telnaes reels at randomly determined positions as described above. The Telnaes reels are not deactivated based on an association with a discontinue symbol. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 1 includes deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol. Stopping the reels at randomly determined positions in Telnaes differs from deactivating reels as in amended independent Claim 1 because the Telnaes reels are stopped based on a random number determined by the control circuitry. The Telnaes game does not anticipate deactivating the active reel

segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, as recited in independent Claim 1.

Furthermore, the Telnaes game does not anticipate repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated. In Telnaes, the reels are rotated and stopped until each reel reaches a randomly determined position. Each play of the Telnaes game ends after one spin of the reels, wherein the control circuitry stops the reels at the randomly determined position and the payout is determined based on the randomly determined positions of the reels. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 1 includes repeating steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated. For at least these reasons, Telnaes does not anticipate a method for facilitating a play of a slot game as in amended independent Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 1 patentably distinguishes over Telnaes and is in condition for allowance.

Claims 4 to 23 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 1 and are also allowable for the reasons given with respect to Claim 1, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claims 34 and 35 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Inoue (U.S. Patent No. 5,722,891). Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

Amended independent Claim 34 is generally directed to a casino gaming apparatus hosting a game having at least a standard mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation. The casino gaming apparatus comprises, amongst other elements, a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to (ii) randomly present symbols via a second reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and (iv) repeat the random presentation of

symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

On Page 5, the Office Action stated that:

Inoue discloses...a processor configured to identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the first reel configuration during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present symbols via a second reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels have been deactivated (see bonus reels [6a,6b,6c] of Fig. 1 and the related description thereof).

Contrary to the Office Action, and unlike independent Claim 34, Inoue does not disclose a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to (ii) randomly present symbols via a second reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and (iv) repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

Inoue discloses a gaming machine having a first set of reels for a primary game and a second set of reels for a bonus game. Inoue discloses that after a bonus game is started, the second set of reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are rotated simultaneously. Stop buttons (9a, 9b and 9c) are depressed as desired by the player, to stop the second reel set, reel after reel. If the stop buttons (9a, 9b and 9c) are not depressed by the player, the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are automatically stopped based on a counter in the same manner as for a normal game. Therefore, for each play of the Inoue game, each of the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are rotated and stopped one time. Inoue discloses that successive plays of the Inoue game are played in a similar fashion (col. 6, lines 52-55). Inoue does not anticipate repeating the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols in the same play of the game. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 34 includes a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to repeat

the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

Moreover, Inoue discloses stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of the bonus game based on player input or automatically stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) based on a counter. The reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of Inoue are not stopped based on a discontinue symbol presented by the reels. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 34 discloses a processor that is configured to deactivate reels presenting a discontinue symbol. For at least these reasons, Inoue does not anticipate a casino gaming apparatus as in amended independent Claim 34. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 34 patentably distinguishes over Inoue and is in condition for allowance.

Amended independent Claim 35 is generally directed to a method for facilitating a play of a slot game. The method includes, amongst other elements, (a) presenting, in the play of the slot game, a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments, (b) presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, (c) deactivating the active display segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, and (d) repeating steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.

On Page 6, the Office Action stated that:

Inoue discloses a method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising: presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments; presenting symbols in each of the active display segments (ie: active paylines, see display [2] of Fig. 1 and the related description thereof); deactivating the active display segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, and repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and deactivating the active display segments associated with the discontinue symbols, until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated (ie: until stop reels is hit)(see col. 3, ln 50-67, col. 5, ln 35-52).

Contrary to the Office Action, and unlike amended independent Claim 35, Inoue does not anticipate a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that comprises, amongst other elements, (b) presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, (c)

deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol, and (d) repeating steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated. As described above, the Inoue reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are not stopped based on a discontinue symbol presented by the reels. Additionally, for each play of the Inoue game, each of the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) are rotated and stopped one time. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 35 includes repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue symbol in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated. For at least these reasons, Inoue does not anticipate a method as recited in independent Claim 35. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 35 patentably distinguishes over Inoue and is in condition for allowance.

The Office Action rejected Claims 24 to 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Mayeroff (U.S. Patent No. 6,186,894). Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

Amended independent Claim 24 is generally directed to a casino gaming apparatus hosting a game having at least a standard mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation. The casino gaming apparatus comprises, amongst other elements, a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to (ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate any of the reels presenting a discontinue symbol and (iv) repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

On Pages 6 and 7, the Office Action stated that:

Mayeroff discloses a casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising: a video screen...; a user interface...; and a processor configured to identify a predetermined symbol combination occurring on the display grid during the

standard mode of operation to activate the bonus mode operation...and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated (see col. 4: ln 29-col. 6: ln 54).

Contrary to the Office Action, and unlike amended independent Claim 24, Mayeroff does not anticipate a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to (ii) deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and (iii) repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated. By sharp contrast, Mayeroff discloses a slot machine having a first set of reels for a primary game and a second set of reels for a bonus game. The Mayeroff slot machine provides a player multiple plays or chances of the bonus game. In each play of the Mayeroff bonus game, the second set of reels is rotated and stopped one time to determine any bonus win provided to the player. The bonus game ends when the number of chances for the bonus game expires. Mayeroff does not anticipate repeating the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols in the same play of the game until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 24 includes a processor that is configured to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

Moreover, in Mayeroff, each of the secondary event reels are activated and stopped for each chance provided to the player in the bonus event. However, none of the secondary event reels in Mayeroff are deactivated after presenting a discontinue symbol. On the other hand, amended independent Claim 24 includes a processor that, during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol. For at least these reasons, Mayeroff does not anticipate a casino gaming apparatus as in amended independent Claim 24. Accordingly, Applicants

respectfully submit that amended independent Claim 24 patentably distinguishes over Mayeroff and is in condition for allowance.

Claims 25 to 28 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 24 and are also allowable for the reasons given with respect to Claim 24, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claims 2 and 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Telnaes in view of Inoue. Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

As discussed above, Telnaes does not anticipate the method in amended independent Claim 1. Inoue does not remedy the deficiencies of Telnaes with respect to amended independent Claim 1. As discussed above, Inoue teaches stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of the bonus game based on player input or automatically stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) based on a counter. The proposed combination of Telnaes and Inoue does not teach, suggest or disclose a method for facilitating a play of a slot game that comprises, amongst other elements, repeating steps (b) and (c) in the same play of the slot game until a predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated, as in amended independent Claim 1 and dependent Claims 2 and 3. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 2 and 3 patentably distinguish over the proposed combination of Telnaes and Inoue and are also allowable for the reasons given with respect to independent Claim 1, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claims 29 to 32 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mayeroff in view of Marnell, II et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,332,219; hereafter "Marnell"). Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

Marnell teaches an electronic poker game with a randomly generated bonus outcome. The bonus outcome is added to any winning outcome obtained by a player. Marnell does not remedy the deficiencies of Mayeroff discussed above with respect to independent Claim 24. The proposed combination of Mayeroff and Marnell does not

teach, suggest or disclose a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to (ii) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (iii) deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and (iv) repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated as in amended independent Claim 24 and dependent Claims 29 to 32. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 29 to 32 patentably distinguish over the proposed combination of Mayeroff and Marnell and are also allowable for the reasons given with respect to independent Claim 24, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

The Office Action rejected Claim 33 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Mayeroff in view of Inoue. Applicants respectfully disagree with and traverse this rejection for at least the reasons discussed below.

The Office Action stated that Mayeroff is silent with regard to a processor that is configured to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the reels have been deactivated as in amended independent Claim 24 and dependent Claim 33. The Office Action relied on Inoue for this teaching. As discussed above, Inoue teaches stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) of the bonus game based on player input or automatically stopping the reels (6a, 6b and 6c) based on a counter. The proposed combination of Mayeroff and Inoue does not teach, suggest or disclose a processor that, in the same play of the game during the bonus mode of operation, is configured to (i) randomly present symbols via a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel strips, (ii) deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, wherein each deactivated reel segment is eliminated from the bonus mode, and (iii) repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated as in amended independent Claim 24 and dependent Claim 33. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that dependent Claim 33 patentably distinguishes over the proposed

combination of Mayeroff and Inoue and is also allowable for the reasons given with respect to amended independent Claim 24, and because of the additional features recited in these claims.

New Claims 36 to 39 are presented for the Examiner's consideration. New Claims 36 to 39 are at least supported by originally filed Figures 1A to 1J, 3A, 3B, 6 and 7 and the corresponding description thereof in Applicants' specification. New Claims 36 to 39 depend from one of independent Claims 1, 24, 34 and 35 and patentably distinguish over Telnaes, Inoue, Mayeroff, Marnell and any combination thereof for the reasons given with respect to independent Claims 1, 24, 34 and 35 and because of the additional features recited in these claims. Accordingly, new Claims 36 to 39 are allowable.

An earnest endeavor has been made to place this application in condition for formal allowance and in the absence of more pertinent art such action is courteously solicited. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this Response, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,
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